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Senator Brown Presents Beverage Container and Recycling Task Force Report

Task Force recommendations aim to elevate Michigan's standing as a leader in recycling, while improving the state's Beverage Container Law

Wednesday, October 22, 2003 — Local recycling programs would receive a much-needed boost and retailers would have time to prepare for any expansion of the state's Beverage Container Law under recommendations released today by the Michigan Beverage Container and Recycling Task Force.

The recommendations, the culmination of nearly 10 months of work, outline one of the most comprehensive recycling efforts to be undertaken by any state, and are the first in-depth review of Michigan's beverage container law since it was initiated by voters in 1976.

"I am pleased to present this report that outlines an aggressive action plan to put Michigan back on the national recycling map," said task force chairman Sen. Cameron S. Brown (R-Fawn River Township). "The citizens of this state told us emphatically that more must be done to make comprehensive recycling a priority and this task force has come back with recommendations that are effective, fair and responsible to all the people of Michigan."

Titled, "The Citizens' Agenda: An Action Plan to Improve Recycling and the Beverage Container Law," the report recommends more than 40 legislative proposals aimed at increasing Michigan's recycling rate which, currently at 20 percent, is among one of the worst in the nation and dead last among neighboring Great Lakes states. The task force also recommended that a statewide advisory council should consider structural and funding-related issues created by the beverage container law before mandating its expansion.

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In presenting the recommendations to Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkema, Brown said the task force has balanced the debate to include discussion of increased recycling statewide and laying the groundwork for a scientifically sound and economically responsible review of current law.

“Senator Sikkema was right,” Brown said. “Changes are needed to both our recycling program and our bottle deposit law and the citizens we heard from at these hearings gave us a clear path to follow.”

Commissioned by Sikkema to lead the task force (consisting of Senators Patty Birkholz, Mike Bishop, Alan Cropsey, Jud Gilbert and Wayne Kuipers), Brown developed a mission statement and scheduled a series of nine public hearings around Michigan to guide the deliberations of the task force.

Highlights of more than 40 proposed legislative initiatives made in the task force’s recommendation include:

- Creating a new Recycling Advisory Council in Michigan law to guide future recycling programs and ensure that the state maintains an aggressive stance on recycling.
- Adding a new \$3 per ton surcharge on certain solid waste in order to generate over \$50 million annually in funding for local recycling programs.
- Staging a statewide anti-litter campaign and promoting other educational efforts to instill a recycling ethic in Michigan citizens.
- Enacting a new strategy for more landfill bans as an incentive to recycle and a way to further control the type of solid waste entering our landfills.
- Crafting a series of tax credits to spur recycling investment and taking steps to help create new markets for recycled products.

Sikkema praised the work of the task force upon receipt of the report, acknowledging the importance of restoring Michigan’s leadership in this important environmental issue.

“If Michigan is going to take its rightful place as an environmental leader, it has to address ways to improve recycling overall,” Sikkema said. “Clearly, addressing Michigan’s 27-year-old bottle return law is part of any solution for increased recycling. But that alone will not solve this issue. The Michigan Beverage Container and Recycling Task Force has mapped out a path that is both reasonable and groundbreaking in our efforts to make Michigan a recycling leader.”

Brown was also quick to point out that new directions are called for in improving the state’s current beverage container law, otherwise known as the bottle deposit law.

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“This law is an important tool in our recycling toolbox, but the dealers and distributors have had immeasurable burdens to bear in implementing it,” Brown firmly stated. “Certainly this law is effective in recycling certain items, but it does have costs that are not fully appreciated by the average citizen. We must make basic changes before we can responsibly call for the expansion of the current law.”

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A full copy of the report can be obtained online at: www.senate.michigan.gov/gop

Comments can be recorded from the Senate Majority Communications Hotline. Dial (517) 373-4000, then follow the menu to the desired senator’s comments.

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